

Commission for Energy Use and Climate Change

Meeting Minutes

June 9, 2021

Virtual Meeting

Attendees:

Liz Galloway – Commissioner

Eliza Johnston – Commissioner

Aladdine Joroff – Nominated Commissioner

Julie Wood – Commissioner

Larry Yu – Commissioner

Oliver Sellers-Garcia – (member ex-officio) Director of Office of Sustainability and Environment

Review and adopt the minutes from the May 12, 2021 meeting

- Julie nominated, Aladdine second, approved unanimously (Liz abstained)

Recap of buildings sector in An Act Creating a Next-Generation Roadmap for Massachusetts Climate Policy

- Liz presented the attached slides.
- There has been some work to compile costs for net-zero commercial buildings while the Roadmap bill was in debate
- Somerville has also compiled data based on what has happened since our zoning was updated with additional building requirements
- OSE and planning working together to compile that and it will be made available to DOER
- Larry: what should we be looking for as DER develops a definition of a net zero building and the net zero stretch code? Liz: there are some industry groups that have worked on guidance for this question that may be useful.
- Oliver: yes, this is definitely something the City will be interested in following, interested to hear anything anyone learns in their professional life. DOER planning on having a draft at the end of the summer for commercial buildings.
- Aladdine: one question is whether this will give municipalities more authority to disallow fossil fuels

- Eliza: has a colleague working with communities on possible changes to their Green Communities status/funding based on whether they adopt the net zero stretch code
- Larry: what might the process/timing look like in Somerville. Oliver: not completely sure, but hopefully based on our updated zoning structure making changes should be easier going forward. We will need to see the details of the net zero stretch code to see how it might be incorporated locally.

Outside expertise and topics for future CEUCC meetings

- Ibrahim Lopez Hernandez, previously of Greenroots and recently hired north Suffolk regional (City of Chelsea, in partnership with the City of Revere and Town of Winthrop) sustainability manager
- Might be good to take advantage of this while we are still working virtually, can get speakers that are not local
- Suggested topics:
 - Equity in climate planning
 - Experience from other communities on policies they have advanced, possibilities:
 - Brookline's second take on the gas ban – it is definitely a unique take based on the use of short-term special permits)
 - Boulder, Amherst, Boston (others) with rental registration programs
 - Federal infrastructure bill
 - MassSave

CEUCC expertise spotlight

- Oliver: how do we best explore opportunities as a commission that taps commissioners' unique knowledge? Might we want to have a more formal process or a dedicated time in each meeting where commissioners could share something they are facing dealing with at their work that might help better bring commissions insights to the forefront? Doesn't necessarily have to be specifically related to Somerville or actionable in the near term.
- Liz: sounds like a good idea, would not be a heavy lift

- Eliza: maybe could think about organizing this around certain themes to organize the conversation a bit, Oliver: we could, we could also keep it free form so it does start to become burdensome or too rigid and start to feel overwhelming
- Liz, Larry & Julie: would find it valuable to hear from other members
- Julie: could provide a standing time on the agenda for a member to provide an update, we do this in a regional climate collaborative group I manage. I can provide the first one in July
- Larry: Can you tell us more about the regional climate collaborative. Julie: Sure! Charles River Climate Compact is 22 of the 35 communities in the Charles River watershed that are working together on climate adaptation issues that are better addressed at the regional level. One example is developing a flood model which cost much less to do as a group of municipalities than each individual doing this all on its own.

Update on proposed rental registry and energy disclosure ordinance

- Oliver shared a May 24th memo to City Council on this topic
- One of the largest SCF initiatives that is being advanced by a department other than OSE (OSPCD Housing Division).
- This has evolved since SCF, basic idea was how do we incentivize energy efficiency in rental units, realized we don't even know which residences are rentals, so needed to develop a program to collect some very basic information on the units – namely address. Also collecting energy information at the time of lease – still sorting out exactly what will be required, possibly: HVAC system info, building type, energy bills.
- This will be mandatory. There will be fines for non-compliance.
- Can enhance this as we go and possibly make things stricter down the line as far as requirements for energy use in rental units.
- Liz: any thought about incentivizing upgrades since these can be pricey. Oliver: yes, possibly that is the kind of thing we could pursue in the future which would be in line with our objective for this action.

- Aladdine: could have a MassSave speaker on their new program requirements and how this could connect with that
- Larry: how does this help with non-displacement or rate increases? Oliver: one way is that we made this an independent program based on self-reporting. If the City was doing this through inspections the reality is that units would potentially get shut down which would be very unfortunate for the person living there who may have no other options for a living situation. Using a phased in approach with a relatively “gentle” approach to hopefully prevent against landlords using this change as a reason to evict people or immediately raise the rent
- Larry: how can we help this process? Oliver: once we know when hearings will be (likely the fall) can talk with and Councilors you have relationships with. We could also explore this topic at a future meeting.
- Aladdine: once my research is complete I can talk about what I have been working on
- Larry: talk to members of Legislative Matters now? Oliver: Sure, no reason not to start talking to folks now. Despite it being someone mundane and practical and starting as climate initiative it really will have a lot of benefits. One very simple one is to have the contact information for more people and some ability to distinguish between renter contacts and owner contacts. Also, health benefits will come from any building improvements we are able to guide people to.
- Larry: have you thought about adding accessibility to the disclosure? Oliver: we haven’t but that is a good suggestion
- Mary: Is EV charging on the list of things landlords would disclose? Oliver: I’ll look into that, sounds like a good idea.